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Sketch of 'The Italian New Medical Doctrine.'

By J. Greely Stevenson, M. D.

The theory of the essence of diseases which at present prevails in northern and central Italy, and which is supported by learned and eloquent instructors in the schools of Padua, Pavia, Bologna, and Pisa, and which, under the name of the Italian New Medical Doctrine, is recommending itself to the patriotic feelings of the Italian students and practitioners of medicine, is deserving of notice from its ingeniousness, and the high character of its promulgators.

Founded upon the system that was urged upon the medical public by John Brown and his disciples, it has been called the Brunonianism of Italy; but it contains principles essentially different from those of the Scotch reformer, which are important in themselves and in their practical results. Two of the favourite theorems of Brown's doctrines were, I. That all the powers applied to the living fibre are identical in their action, being all more or less stimulant. II. That the greatest number of diseases arises from indirect debility, or a diminution of excitement succeeding to excess of stimulus. Now the Italian philosophers admit three classes of agents; stimulant, counterstimulant, and irritative, which give rise to three morbid diatheses, viz. of stimulus, of counter-stimulus, and of irritation. They also teach that inflammation is always sthenic, that it consists in excess of stimulus, and tends to propagate or create excessive stimulus; and that the greatest number of general diseases proceed from some inflammation which is always identical in its nature, though not always so in its character and appearances.

Much importance, too, is attached to the distinction made between diseases of excess or want of stimulus, (which they term diathesic diseases) and diseases of irritation, which are always owing to simple disorder of parts, and therefore always in their essence, local.

The doctrine of counterstimulus, according to Professor Tommassini, teaches, I. That many substances exert an action diametrically opposite to *stimulation*, and produce those effects upon the excitement, immediately and positively, which were once ascribed to the action of negative powers and the diminution of stimulus.

II. That these substances destroy the effects of excessive stimulus, even without producing evacuations; and if they are applied to the living fibre in undue quantity, they produce diseases which are only to be cured by an increase of stimulants.

III. That these counterstimulant substances afford the remedies of all morbid phenomena which arise from the diathesis of stimulus; as, on the other hand, stimulants are the appropriate remedies of the state of counterstimulus, or debility.

IV. That the living fibre can bear a quantity of stimulant, or of counterstimulant substances, in exact proportion to the strength of the diathesis, whether of stimulus or of counter stimulus, or, in other words, whether sthenic or asthenic. And that this ability in the system of supporting remedies, presents to our view the just measure of the morbid diathesis more truly than the symptoms of diseases exhibit it.

While these maxims are sufficiently at variance with the doctrine of the Scotch reformer, a still greater deviation from his system is made by the Italian school, in rejecting the doctrine of indirect debility; which teaches that, in a great number of cases, the excessive application of stimulants may induce in the living solid a certain morbid state, which requires the further use of stimulants for its removal; the use, for example, of wine, ether, opium, &c.

The great extent that was thus ascribed to the asthenic diathesis, reduced to a very small number the diseases which depend upon increased action, and which are curable by the antiphlogistic treatment. But Rasori, of Milan, taught that indirect debility was not admissible to this great extent; that many diseases which were thought to consist in diminished action, and to call for the use of stimulant remedies, are curable by bloodletting, purging, and the class of counterstimulants; and thus, that the diseases of excessive stimulus, were much more numerous than those arising from its diminution.

This theory required a different classification of remedies; and it follows that many of the remedies termed stimulating by the Brunonians, must be classed with bloodletting, cold, &c.; such are mercury and antimony. And further, that the morbid affections which are cured by these means are sthenic, consisting in the diathesis of stimulus, or in the increased action of the vital powers.

These fundamental maxims of the New Medical doctrine were already for a long time applied to the patients in many of the hospitals of Italy, while yet the distinction between sthenic inflammation was retained, and the employment of stimulants was general in the phlogotic affections of the eyes, lungs, liver, and alimentary canal, which were deemed asthenic because they were of long duration, and not very active in their processes. But Tommassini, of Bologna, teaches that every inflammation is of a sthenic nature, or that it is always intrinsically a process of excessive stimulus; that it is not considered to be asthenic, because existing in a feeble subject, nor to be confounded with those processes which are its consequences.

In all phlegmasiæ the fever is thought to be the effect, and not the cause of the inflammatory process with which it is united. Thus the greatest number of diseases are of phlogistic or inflammatory origin, whether they are acute, as typhus, bilious fever, or yellow fever, &c.; or whether chronic, as slow nervous fevers, the physconiæ or parabysmata, venereal affections, those of the glands and skin, and many other diseases which were generally considered to be simple convulsive affections. The Bolognese professor insists very largely upon this point, that all febrile affections are of inflammatary origin, even where there exists great depression of the muscular forces and of the pulse, where the patient is (to use his words) physiologically feeble; for this state, which consists in the imperfect or weak performance of the functions, is not to be confounded with pathologic debility, which has its essence in the diminution of the vital power. Thus hysterical diseases, tic douloureux, sciatica, and other forms of neuralgia, are dependent upon inflammation of the neurilemma enveloping the nerves which are directly distributed to the affected part, or which are important from their sympathetic relations. Typhus, nervous fever, petechial fevers, yellow fever (at least as it appears in Europe, for Prof. Tommassini made his observations particularly upon the yellow fever of Genoa and Leghorn) all develope the diathesis of stimulus, an inflammatory process curable by the counter-stimulant or depressing treatment. Of the same character, are diseases which arise from contagion, small-pox, measles, scarlatina, &c., for though the contagious principles, or the miasmata of these diseases may be irritating, yet when irritative actions have a certain degree of force, they are followed by inflammatory processes in the parts to which the irritating matter is immediately applied, or upon which it particularly acts. It would be tedious to enumerate all the morbid affections and conditions, acute and chronic, nervous and organic, which are founded upon the phlogistic diathesis; such are most of the diseases that afflict humanity, and the catalogue of severe diseases and of deaths, is almost entirely marked with the seal of inflammation.

The Brunonian maxim, which derives the nature of the diathesis from the nature of the morbific causes that have preceded it, is also rejected; and the etiology of diseases is studied more in the remedies that cure them, than in the symptoms which they exhibit. Thus, a vast number of inflammations succeeds to the action of debilitating powers to which men are principally exposed, such as cold, moisture, privations, grief, &c.; and violent phlogotic fevers are developed, which are not to be attributed to the exertions of a 'vis medicatrix naturæ,' but to the immediate creation of a morbid state, of a nature directly opposed to that of the preceding causes.

The view that is taken of the nature and action of pain is peculiar to the Italian Medical Doctrine, and is made to harmonize with the more general considerations of morbid conditions and processes. 'Pain,' says Prof. Tomassini, 'which presents an infinity of gradations and modifications, from the slightest uneasiness and most trival sufferings, to atrocious spasms and the most threatning feelings of prostration, is a more or less strong expression of counterstimulus, or of that depression which counterstimulants produce in the living fibre.' The effects which it is capable of producing upon the excitement are peculiar to it, and may often be at variance with the effects produced by the very disease which is the cause of the pain itself. Thus in fevers, and more remarkably in the intermittents, the occurrence of severe pain, accompanied by cold sweats and faintness, forces us to suspend the administration of those remedies which are adapted to the principal disease; and it now becomes dangerous to employ the bloodletting, the emetics and the purgatives, which will be victorious when the fever shall be rekindled.

The chief writers on the Italian New Medical doctrine are not agreed in their views of the action of irritating substances, and of the irritative processes; those processes which characterise colic, gastric fevers, tetanus, and hydrophobia, &c. Dr. Guani, of Genoa, explains them by the heterogeneity and want of affinity that exist between these substances and the taste (the 'gusto') of the living animal fibre; so that their application produces in the fibre a movement of repugnance or disorder, which is altogether different from excitation. For this philosopher asserts, that there are certain unassimilable and heterogeneous substances, which he denominates irrito-stimulants, that are incapable of producing an action analogous to the animal excitement; and that man, as well as other bodies, is endowed with a property inherent in his organization, which admits or rejects all that comes in contact with him, whether mediately or immediately; he names this property, Animal Affinity.

Professor Rubini, of Bologna, also teaches that the action of irritating powers is confined to disordering and disarranging the animal machine; and that the morbid state thus induced in the fibre, constitutes a third diathesis, the diathesis of irritation, which does not cause either an excess or a deficiency of vital action, but produces a change in its mode, and a want of harmony in the movements of the living solid. These authors conclude that diseases of irritation are only to be cured by the removal of their cause, viz. the local disorder by counter-irritation, and by a stimulant treatment adapted to the exigencies of the case.

Giannini, of Milan, and Bondioli, of Padua, declare that the phenomena of irritation are local in

their origin and nature: in the words of the former, they are 'affections universally local;' and the general tumult and disorder are, by the latter, explained on the principle of sympathetic connexions.

Monteggia and Tommassini are inclined to consider the first impression of irritating powers, whether they be mechanical or chemical, as depressing; but that an inflammatory process is soon developed, which produces a diathesis of increased action, and demands a proper counter-stimulant treatment.—Tommassini believes that the symptoms of irritation the effects of are laceration and distention of the living fibres.

This imperfect analysis of the Italian pathology may be concluded by some account of the corresponding classification of remedies. The number of stimulants is very small; alcohol, ether, ammonia, opium, musk, the aromatics, &c. Most of the powerful agents are included in the class of counter-stimulants, and are those which are demanded in the greater number of diseases, viz. bloodletting and cold-bathing; purgatives and emetics; mercury, antimony, zinc, lead, arsenic, and iron, in their various combinations; the mineral and vegetable acids; many vegetable bitters; digitalis, aconite, conium maculatum, hydrocyanic acid, &c.

All the remedies used by the Humoralists for the purpose of expelling, or correcting, or enveloping, or blunting the offensive acrimonies; the deobstruents, the emmenagogues, the anthelmintics, the diuretics, the anti-syphilitics, &c.; all these are supposed to have a greater or less counter-stimulant, or anti-phlogistic action. Connected with this general influence, they have an elective property which determines their actions more especially upon certain organs or systems; as tartar emetic and digitalis on the sanguineous system, and so of others.

Although the preceding observations may not lead to any valuable practical results, it is hoped that it will not be deemed amiss to have offered a short sketch of the doctrines which are maintained by professors eminent among all others for their learning, eloquence, faithfulness, and urbanity; and in schools which present to the student of medicine, advantages equal to those offered in any of the institutions that are better known and more highly celebrated, and which alone are frequented by those who seek in foreign countries the extended opportunities of study and observation, which are denied to them here by the superior condition and honest pride of the American people.—*New-Eng. Journal of Med. & Sur.*

EXTRACTS FROM DR. BAILLIE'S POSTHUMOUS WORKS.

Of some Affections of the Liver.—There may be, and often is, a deficiency in the quantity of bile mixed, with the alvine evacuations, without any disease in the structure of the liver. The fæces are more or less pale; but there is no hardness or fullness in the region of the liver. Every thing there, upon the most attentive examination, is discovered to be soft and perfectly natural to the feeling. Mild purgative medicines, with small doses of the pilula hydrargyri, are commonly very useful in such cases. Four or five grains of the pilula hydrargyri should be given every night for some time, and the purgative every morning, or every other morning. The mercurial medicine should not be carried so far as to make any impression upon the constitution, if this can be avoided: it is only intended to stimulate the ducts of the liver. The best purgative medicine, upon the whole, is the sulphate of magnesia in moderate doses, so as to produce two or three evacuations daily. When the alvine discharges have for some little time resumed their natural colour, the pilula hydrargyri should be given up.

Sometimes the bile discharged from the liver is of a dark colour, and the motions become darker than usual. The intensity of the colour differs very much in different individuals, and occasionally it is nearly as black as ink. The liver at the same time may be, and commonly is, quite sound in its structure. The treatment should, in this case be, in a great measure, similar to that in the former, but a little more active. Small doses of calomel may be used instead of the pilula hydrargyri, and the purgative medicines may be a little more powerful. When the colour of the motions has for a short time (eight or ten days) become natural, the calomel may be given up; but the purgative medicines may be continued longer, at somewhat greater intervals, as for instance, every third day. Where the motions are very green in their colour, magnesia or some alkali may be mixed with the purgatives. In the above cases the Cheltenham and Leamington waters have been often very useful; but I think that many practitioners of the present day have erred in administering mercury too long, and in too liberal doses. When mercury is carried beyond the point that is necessary, it often injures the constitution by weakening it, and by rendering the nervous system very irritable.

There is sometimes a greater fulness, and greater sense of resistance, over the whole region of the liver than natural, with more or less of tenderness upon pressure. This arises from some chronic inflammation of the substance of the liver. In such a case, the repeated application of leeches to the seat of the liver, and the occasional application of a blister, are often of the greatest use. A mild course of mercury should be recommended, so as in some measure to effect the constitution; and this should be administered both externally and internally. It should not however be carried beyond the necessity. Long and repeated salivations will seldom be required, and often have done much and permanent injury to the constitution. When the liver has become soft, has lost its tenderness, and resumed its natural size, the mercury may be given up. If the liver shall not have returned altogether to its natural state, and the constitution appears to be suffering from the course of mercury, a seaton may be inserted under the skin in the region of the liver, and the mercury may be given up or suspended. In some cases I have found a fullness of the liver, which had eluded the effect of mercury, to be removed by a seaton. The administration of purgatives is of great advantage in all such cases, and the Cheltenham waters are often highly beneficial.

Of Abcess in the Liver.—Inflammation of the liver will occasionally terminate by forming an abcess. The abcess will in time break externally, or it will communicate with the lungs, with the stomach, or with both of these viscera. When the abcess breaks externally, the part gradually heals, unless there be something very unfavourable in the constitution; and the patient recovers entirely. When the abcess communicates with the lungs, the matter is brought up by coughing, and the patient, if prudent in the management of himself, and possessed of a tolerably good constitution, will sometimes at last entirely recover. When the abscess communicates with the stomach, the matter is sometimes discharged by vomiting, and sometimes by the bowels. In this case, too, the patient will not unfrequently recover; and the same observation may be extended to an abscess of the liver which communicates both with the stomach and the lungs, although the circumstances are more unfavourable in this than in the other two cases. In these various cases little benefit is procured by medicine but great injury may be done by imprudent or unskilful management. The bowels should be kept always free from costiveness; if there be any considerable feverishness, it may be lessened by saline draughts; or, if the constitution be weak, it may be strengthened by the prudent use of tonic medicines. The diet should be light and nourishing, and in general wine should be avoided. The exercise, if the weather be favourable, should be gentle; but it should not be taken at all if the weather be ungenial, or if it be attended with pain or much fatigue. A stimulating diet, too much or too violent exercise, and exposure to a cold atmosphere, may do much mischief, or even lead on to a fatal event.

Of Tubercles in the Liver.—Tubercles of different kinds are formed not unfrequently in the liver, at a middle or more advanced age. They are often connected with an intemperate mode of living, but they will sometimes occur in persons who have past an uniformly temperate life. They are frequently the cause of ascites, but sometimes they do not produce this effect. No medicines, as far as I have seen, are attended with any permanent benefit in this state of disease. By temperate living, by gentle exercise, and by the bowels being kept rather open, patients will not unfrequently live for some years with such complaints; but I do not recollect any instance of a patient actually recovering from them.

Of Hydatids in the Liver.—I have known only two instances of this disease in the living body. The one was in an old lady, who had been subject from time to time, for many years, to symptoms, very much resembling those of gallstones. At length, after a more severe attack than usual, the constitution gradually sunk, and she died. Cysts containing hydatids were discovered upon examination of the body after death.

The other case was that of a young lady, who had suffered occasionally a good deal of pain in the region of the liver, and at length passed some hydatids by stool. She for the time recovered, but what became of her afterwards I have never learned. It is obvious that the formation of hydatids in the liver, even when the existence of this disease can be perfectly ascertained in the living body, can receive no essential benefit from medicine. If inflammation should take place in the progress of this disease, it may be removed or lessened by taking away blood from the arm, or topically: and if at any time violent pain should occur, it may be mitigated by opium and the warm bath. The bowels should be kept rather open; and there will always be some advantage, in patients affected with this disease, living temperately. Patients may live many years with this complaint; but if it be gradually making progress, even though slowly, it must, in almost every instance, have ultimately a fatal termination.

Of Gallstones.—The formation of gallstones in the ducts of the liver, or in the gall-bladder, is not a rare disease, and I have known many instances of it. The paroxysms of this complaint are generally attended with exquisite pain; but I have known a few cases where the pain has been moderate; Some cases I have likewise known where patients have been subject to symptoms of indigestion for many months, without paleness of the stools, yellowness of the skin, or any other symptoms which denote the existence of gallstones; yet this condition of the stomach has ultimately led on to the symptoms of gallstones being formed in the most distinct manner. It is obvious that no solvent can be successfully applied to a gallstone within the living body. While the symptoms of gallstones exist, it must either be in some duct of the liver or in the cystic duct, or in the ductus communis choledochus. But a solvent introduced into the stomach cannot come in contact with a gallstone in any of these situations. As soon as a gallstone drops into the duodenum, where a solvent might reach it, all symptoms belonging to gallstones immediately cease; and for the time the patient becomes quite well. In the treatment of gallstones, therefore, the symptoms can only be mitigated by medicine. If any inflammatory symptoms have been produced, which is sometimes the case, they can be removed or lessened by general and topical bleeding. The exquisite pain which is commonly felt during a paroxysm of gallstones, can be generally mitigated by large doses of opium, by fomentations, and by the warm bath. Purgative medicines should be given, of sufficient power to counteract the effects of the opium. Mercury appears to me to have no power over a pure case of gallstones, unmixed with any fullness or hardness of the liver; and the Cheltenham or Leamington waters are of much less advantage than in the more ordinary cases, where the func-

tions of the liver are merely deranged. No particular mode of life will protect a patient against the recurrence of gallstones; but there is always some advantage in such persons living temperately, and keeping their bowels free from costiveness.

Influenza.

The Epidemic Catarrh or Influenza, has just been felt, and is spreading with alarming rapidity. It has overrun the chief towns of the United States; but it appears to have been more severe there than it will be here, without it be among children, with several of whom well marked symptoms of the *grippe* have appeared. It is the most remarkable epidemic we have observed at Quebec, for it may be said that one half of the population is affected; and as it appears to have its source in the particular condition of the atmosphere, since the commencement of March, it is probable it will continue its ravages for some time. The practitioner therefore cannot too much caution persons against the predisposing causes; they are violent exercises, particularly of the lungs, as singing, running, &c. exposure to a cold and damp atmosphere, excess in strong liquors or high-seasoned food, and other causes which will readily suggest themselves. The general treatment has been bathing of the feet, inhaling the steam of water, perspiration, and warm confinement in bed.—But what has best succeeded, is turpentine taken internally; half an ounce, with an ounce of castor oil, has dispelled the influenza in less than forty-eight hours; turpentine has also been much and effectually administered in the States; owing to its powerful agency, it is not always prudent to repeat the dose more than twice, taking care, in case of inflammation, to administer it after copious bleeding, &c.—*Quebec Med. Jour.*

CINCINNATI;

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1826.

THERMOMETRICAL.

THE maximum of heat, during the month of October, was on the first, at 1, P. M. when the mercury rose to 80. The minimum was on the 23rd, at 7, A. M. when it fell to 33. Range for the month, 47; mean temperature, 59.

Mortality of Cincinnati, for October.

Dropsy, 1; Jaundice, 1; Hooping cough, 9; Intermitting fever, 2; Inflammation of the brain, 1; Consumption, 2; Bilious fever, 2; Croup, 2; Unknown, 9; Typhus Fever, 2; Still-born, 1; Improper use of an emetic, 1; Debility, 1; Dysentery, 1; Convulsions, 1; Teething, 1. Adults, 12; children, 25. Total, 37.

N. B. It will be remembered, that in our report of deaths in Cincinnati, all are considered as children, under ten years; and above that age, as adults. [Ed.

Health of Cincinnati, for October.

Fewer deaths occurred in the month of October, than in any preceding month, since June. No particular epidemic prevailed. The character and type of any and every disease, were similar to those that occurred in the months of August and September. We discover a few cases of Typhus Fever reported in the list of deaths for this month, but we very much doubt their real appearance; though they might have exhibited some typhus symptoms in their latter stages. We have been familiar with the diseases of this country for the last eight years, and can truly say, that we never discovered but one case of idiopathic typhus fever, west of the Alleghany mountains. This assertion we have often heard corroborated by the testimony of many of our oldest and most distinguished physicians; and we very much doubt whether ten cases have occurred, in this city, for the last ten years, unless they were manufactured by mal-practice.

The hooping cough has prevailed amongst our children, with more fatality than any other disease; it is still prevalent. A few cases of chicken-pox made their appearance, the latter part of the month; it was very mild, and required little attention—it is still amongst us. Fevers, bilious remitting and intermitting, have appeared in many instances, though in general exceedingly mild seldom proving fatal. Deaths by consumptions, aroused in pre-disposed consumptive constitutions, by our last winter's epidemic, *influenza*, were fewer in this, than in any former month, since June; still there were, within our knowledge, many cases, progressing regularly on to an apparent fatal termination.

[communicated.]

Dr. Wright,

Sir—You might interest some of your readers, by publishing, in your Medical paper, the subjoined copy of a doctor's bill, lately paid by a friend of mine, during his visit at the island of Jamaica. When contrasted with our charges here in Cincinnati, but more particularly with those in Sag Harbour, New York, where the regular price is a shilling a visit, or *three visits per day for twenty-five cents*—this bill of the Jamaica doctor's must be viewed as a medical curiosity worth preserving.

The gentleman had a slight indisposition of four days—a mere feverishness, supervening upon the fatigue of his journey. He thought proper to have professional advice, & for which he paid as follows:

Mr. ——— Dr.

1826.		To ———	£.	s.	d.
July	17	To cathartic pills, .	0	10	0
	18	bitter cathartic mixture,	1	5	0
	–	alterative pills, .	0	10	0
	19	tonic aperient mixture,	1	5	0
	–	cathartic pills, repeated,	0	10	0
	–	visits during the day,	1	12	6
	20	tonic aperient mixt. repeated,	1	5	0
	–	visits during the day,	1	12	6
	21	tonic aperient mixt. repeated,	1	5	0
	22	the mixture twice repeated,	2	10	0
		Received payment.	12	5	0

If I were revengeful in my disposition, and had a patient who should grumble at my charges, nothing would gratify me more, than to have him sick, for *one month*, in the island of Jamaica.

Yours, &c.

[communicated.]

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO.

The Introductory Lectures of the four professors in the Medical College of Ohio, were delivered last week, in the chapel of the former Literary College, commencing with Dr. Cobb on Wednesday. Owing to a mistake in some of the newspapers, as to the day and hour, this first lecture was not so fully attended as it would otherwise have been—a circumstance which we much regret, as the production was one of a neat, chaste, and spirited character. The orator, however, spoke too fast. More deliberation would have rendered his address, we think, more intelligent and interesting to many of his hearers. A blunder similar to that above mentioned, which, we are confident, prevented the attendance of not a few at this lecture, we sincerely hope will never again be permitted to occur.

We were gratified to find that on each succeeding day of lecturing the room was crowded. The medical practitioners of our city were mostly present, as well as several from the country, and many of our most respectable, intelligent, and influential citizens. To account for the entire absence of female hearers we are unable, unless we ascribe it to the want of gallantry on the part of our professors in not extending to them an invitation.—In the Eastern Medical institutions, and in Transylvania, the ladies form a conspicuous part in the introductory lecture room.

The prospects of our Medical College were never so flattering as at the present time. We believe we hazard nothing in the assertion that the foundation of a permanent and flourishing medical school in Cincinnati is at length secured. This being the case, there will doubtless be, at every commencement, more or less of the class who will present themselves for graduation—and we cannot but here express a hope, that our professors will be circumspect and careful in conferring the public honours of their institution. The public expect it of them as well as the profession. We are *honestly* of opinion, and we have reason to believe that our professors do not disagree with us, that a young man who intends to practice the highly important and responsible profession of the Healing Art, should not only have *common sense*, but also a common *English* education at least. Now it is a serious fact, not to be concealed, that in many parts of our country men may be found, possessing, by some means, the distinguishment of *Doctor of Medicine*, who are egregiously and notoriously deficient in these essential qualifications.

The new College Edifice will be so far finished, in a few weeks, we understand, as to admit of the lectures being delivered in that beautiful and convenient building. The room now occupied for the purpose will, of course, be then abandoned.

The number of gentlemen who have already arrived in town from different parts of our state, from Kentucky, Indiana, &c. to avail themselves of the advantages of public medical instruction, is about 70, or perhaps more.

We say to our Medical School, in conclusion, "*God speed.*"

Remarks upon the Preparation of Black Drop, and the Acetic Tincture of Opium. By Thomas Evans.

Though somewhat long, we shall quote the whole of this interesting article.

The Lancaster, or Foulke's black drop, has been esteemed superior to other preparations of opium, in consequence of its being less apt to produce constipation of the bowels, sickness of the stomach, or those distressing nervous affections which sometimes supervene on the use of the gum itself, or the common tinctures of it.

Acetic preparations of opium have long been celebrated. As early as the time of Van Helmont, directions were given for preparing a tincture of opium with the juice of quinces; and the Anodynum specificum Paracelsi was compounded with the juice of sour oranges and quinces; and as these preparations were to be fermented, the product would be acetous acid. It is probable that the recipe for the modern black drop was taken from one of the above prescriptions. The preparation of this article was kept secret for many years, but the recipe having come into the possession of Dr. Armstrong, he very obligingly gave it publicity, and it is now copied into most of the pharmacopœias. Its active ingredients appear to be opium, acetate of morphium, and a small portion of the oil of nutmeg.

The directions given for the preparation of the black drop, in Paris' Pharmacologia, Coxe's American Dispensatory, and the Pharmacopœia of the United States, are all substantially the same; and as we propose offering a few remarks upon the subject, we shall copy from the latter work. It is as follows, viz.

'*Vinegar of Opium, commonly called Black Drop.*

Take of Opium, half a pound,
Vinegar, three pints,
Nutmeg bruised, one ounce and a half,
Saffron, half an ounce;
Boil them to a *proper consistence*; then add,
Sugar, four ounces,
Yeast, one fluid ounce.

Digest for seven weeks, then place in the open air, until it *becomes a syrup*; lastly, decant, *filter*, and bottle it up, adding *a little* sugar to each bottle.'

The first inconsistency which presents itself in this recipe is the name given to the compound: 'Vinegar of Opium' should mean, simply, a solution of opium in vinegar; but the article ordered is a *compound syrup of opium*, with nutmeg and saffron; it is, therefore, evidently incorrect to call it the vinegar of opium.

The direction to 'boil the ingredients to a *proper consistence*,' is entirely indefinite; and the strength of the black drop will necessarily vary, according as the ideas of operators may differ in regard to the *consistence* which *is proper*. One person may think it of 'a *proper consistence*,' when a fourth of the menstruum is evaporated; another not until one half of it is dissipated; and hence the proportion of opium, contained in any given quantity, will be subject to correspondent variation.

After it is brought to 'a *proper consistence*,' we are told to 'digest for seven weeks, and then place in the open air *until it becomes a syrup*.' The digestion for seven weeks appears to be quite unnecessary. The proportion of opium to the vinegar is so great, that only a small part of it can be dissolved, and as vinegar is a ready solvent of opium, it would soon become saturated; all the purposes, therefore, of the tedious process of seven weeks' digestion would be fully accomplished by the previous boiling. As the oil of nutmeg is volatile, and will be easily evaporated, the process of boiling, and subsequent exposure to the air, must nearly or quite dissipate it, so that if any benefit is expected to result from its entering into the compound, this would probably be lost. It would seem more proper that the minute division of the particles of opium should be effected by trituration, instead of boiling, and the article thus made would be equally safe and certain in its strength, since the opium is principally held in suspension. 'Placing it in the open air *until it becomes a syrup*,' involves the same uncertainty as 'boiling to a *proper consistence*.' The term syrup is used to designate liquids which differ greatly in the degree of their fluidity from a thin liquid, to one little less dense than an extract, and consequently the strength of the black drop will be subject to variation, according to the ideas which the operator may entertain of the proper consistence of a syrup.

Lastly, we are directed to 'decant, filter, and bottle it up, adding a little sugar to each bottle., The same vagueness and uncertainty which mark the former part of the recipe are likewise evident here: it is astonishing that directions so indefinite and improper, for preparing an article powerful and even dangerous in its effects, should have been transcribed into professional works, without the smallest animadversion upon their incorrectness. What we are to understand by '*a little sugar*,' or of capacity '*the bottles*' must be to which *that little* is to be added, we are not informed, both of which circumstances, it is evident, will affect the strength of the medicine. The article is already evaporated to the consistence of a syrup, consequently, any quantity of sugar, however '*little*,' which is added, will increase its bulk, and if the bottles in which it is contained be small, and 'a little sugar added to *each one*' as is directed, the relative quantity of opium will be materially diminished. We cannot see the propriety of adding any sugar, since the formula is already '*a syrup*.'

The introduction of yeast into the compound appears also very unnecessary. Its use can only be, we apprehend, with a view of producing fermentation; but as the menstruum used is vinegar, the necessity for fermentation is done away.

Paris' Pharmacologia and the American Dispensatory direct the acetic solution of opium, to be 'boiled to a *proper thickness*;' and after adding 'a quarter of a pound of sugar and *two spoonsful* of yeast, set the whole in a warm place near the fire for six or eight weeks, then place it in the open air *until it becomes a syrup*.' These directions are equally indefinite and improper with the former; in one respect they are more so, since they state the quantity of yeast at the uncertain measure of 'two spoonsful,' leaving us to choose between large and small, table and teaspoons. It is not pretended that the strength of the preparation would be materially altered by the use of either of them, but it is certainly improper to give the direction for preparing so active and important a compound in such ambiguous terms. The American Pharmacopœia has amended this article by changing the measure to one fluid ounce.

(*To be continued.*)

On the presence of Mercury in Urine.—Dr. Cautu, of Turin, has detected the presence of mercury in the urine of persons under the action of mercury.—He collected 60 pounds of urine, voided by syphilitic patients who were employing mercurial frictions. It very speedily became alkaline, and deposited an abundant sediment, which was collected on a filter. The clear liquid was subjected to various trials, but presented no trace of mercury. The precipitate, mixed with an equal weight of carbonate of potash and powdered charcoal, with sufficient water for making it into a paste, was heated gradually to redness in a glass retort, the beak of which was dipped into a recipient filled with water. At the close of the experiment, a pulverulent matter appeared at the bottom of the water, which, after being dried, yielded globules of mercury from mere pressure.—The neck of the retort contained also a number of small globules.—*An. de Chem. et Phys.* vol. 27.

Rupture of the spleen.—Mr. Bailly has published in the *Revue Medicale*, several cases of rupture of the spleen, which he asserts to be a very common occurrence in the intermittent and remittent fevers of the Campagna di Roma. He also found the liver very often gorged with black blood, and its structure broken down and reduced to a putrid jelly.—*N. Am. Med. & Sur. Jour. Oct.* 1826.

Colombo Root.—M. Guibourt gives some observations on Colombo root. The true root, which is that of the cocculus palmatus, (Decandria) is scarcely seen any more in commeree: it has given place to a spurious sort which comes from the Barbary States, and which looks like, but is not, however, the gentian. The true Colombo is of a greenish colour, of a very bitter taste; presents sometimes a radiated structure, and becomes blackish with iodine, on account of the starch which it contains. False Colombo is of a yellow-brown colour, and a taste rather acrid than bitter, an odour like gentain. Iodine discovers no starch in it, and does not change its colour; it becomes blackish-green with sulphate of iron. Its aqueous infusion reddens tournesol; ammonia is disengaged from it by caustic potassa—all, circumstances which do not obtain with genuine Colombo.—*Arch. Gen. Avril.*

Medical College of OHIO.

THE LECTURES in this Institution, will commence on the First Monday of November next; and will continue until the end of the ensuing February, on the following subjects: viz.

Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery, by Jedediah Cobb, M. D.

Materia Medica and Obstetrics, by Josiah Whitman, M. D.

Chemistry and Pharmacy by the Rev. Elijah Slack, A. M.

Theory and Practic of Medicine, by John Moorhead, M. D.

Professor Cobb will lecture daily;—price of his tickets, twelve dollars. Each of the other Professors will lecture at least Five times a week: price of each of their tickets, ten Dollars.

The fee for Matriculation, including the use of the Library and admittance to the Hospital, is three dollars; making the aggregate cost of Instruction, Forty-five dollars.

In the Hospital, (*the Commercial Hospital and Lunatic Asylum of Ohio*,) a regular course of Clinical Instructions is delivered, on the most important of the cases presented.

The cost of Graduation and the Diploma, is Fifteen Dollars.

The large and commodious College Edifice, now erecting, will be in readiness, and a Library provided, against the opening of the Session

Each of the *Medical Districts of Ohio*, is entitled to select, and send for gratuitous admission to all the Lectures, one *indigent* pupil

By order of the Faculty.

JOHN MOORHEAD, *Dean.*

Cincinnati, Aug. 28, 1826.
Medical College of Ohio,

TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY.

Medical Department.

THE LECTURES will commence, as usual, on the first Monday of November, and terminate in the first week of the ensuing March.

Anatomy and Surgery by Dr. Dudley.

Institutes of Medicine and Clinical Practice, by Dr. Caldwell.

Theory and Practice of Medicine, by Dr. Drake.

Obstetricks and the Diseases of Women and Children, by Dr. Richardson.

Materia Medica and Medical Botany, by Dr. Short.

Chemistry, by Dr. Blythe.

The paper of the Bank of the commonwealth of Kentucky, heretofore received at par, by the Professors, having nearly gone out of circulation: specie, or its equivalent will hereafter be expected.—The price of each ticket is fifteen dollars, with the exception of that to the course of Anatomy and Surgery, which is twenty. The Matriculation, with admission to the Library and Reading Room, which are kept open every day, is five dollars,—making the aggregate fees for instruction $100.

The Library, containing about 3000 volumes, is constantly augmenting, by the importation of new standard and periodical works, from Great Britain and the continent of Europe.

The difficulties experienced by the two last Classes, from the disproportionate size of the *Anatomical Hall*, have been obviated by the erection of a new one of enlarged dimensions, with appurtenances and conveniences not surpassed by any other in the United States.

By order of the Faculty,

DAN. DRAKE, M. D.
Dean of the Medical Faculty.

Transylvania University,
July 15, 1816.

MEDICAL SOCIETY.

THE semi-annual meeting of the "*First District Medical Society of Ohio*" will take place on the third Tuesday of this month, 10 o'clock, A. M. in the building formerly occupied as a literary college in Cincinnati.

The Censors will meet at the same place, on Monday, next preceeding the meeting of the society, at 10 o'clock, A. M.

GUY W. WRIGHT, Secretary.
First Dist. Med. Soc. of Ohio.

DR. WRIGHT has removed his office to the rooms directly over the Apothecaries' Hall, corner of Main and Third streets. Persons having business with him relative to this *Journal*, or those wishing his professional services, will find him at the above place.

THE OHIO MEDICAL REPOSITORY Is conducted by GUY W. WRIGHT, M. D. and published semi-monthly, at *Two Dollars* per annum, in advance.